

Comparative Effectiveness Research



At RTI International, our researchers gather and assess the best available research about health care treatments, health behaviors, and health policy to foster better decision making and improve patient care outcomes and quality of life. Since 1997, we have operated an Evidence-Based Practice Center on behalf of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and we also serve as one of 13 members of AHRQ's DEcIDE Network.

RTI brings together multidisciplinary project teams—scientists and technicians in medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, statistics, epidemiology, health services, economics, and policy—to produce rigorous systematic reviews on topics related to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of common diseases and clinical conditions. We analyze relevant scientific literature and conduct studies using electronic and survey data to compare the outcomes of therapies used for treating conditions that have important public health significance.

Our researchers

- Generate evidence from observational studies using data from health insurers, electronic medical records, and surveys
- Synthesize evidence into comparative effectiveness reviews and systematic reviews

What is comparative effectiveness research?

Comparative effectiveness research examines which treatment options work best for a given population and under what circumstances, based on the relative benefits, harms, and costs of those treatments.

- Develop and enhance methods for conducting systematic reviews and analyzing observational data
- Disseminate best practices through our health communication and marketing capabilities
- Collaborate with guideline developers such as professional societies and health plan officials
- Work with health systems to embed clinical guidelines into electronic medical records.

RTI-UNC Evidence-Based Practice Center

In collaboration with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we operate an Evidence-Based Practice Center (EPC) for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The center combines RTI's research and data coordinating capabilities with the clinical resources of the university's five health sciences schools, coordinated through the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Sciences Research.

With nearly 450 clinical, substantive, and methods experts at its disposal, the Center conducts studies and activities for AHRQ and its partners and other federal and state agencies, as well as for professional societies and associations, patient and consumer groups, managed care organizations and insurers, and pharmaceutical firms.

EPC personnel

- Develop and disseminate authoritative evidence reports (or technology assessments) on critical health care topics affecting all population groups
- Provide partners with critical information to improve clinical practice and patient health and well-being
- Enhance methodologies for evidence reports and technology assessments
- Determine the effects of such materials on health care practices and patient outcomes.

Since its inception in 1997, the Center has produced more than 80 reports on key clinical topics and health policy issues, as well as evidence-based methods, practice, and policy.

Recent Reports from the RTI-UNC Evidence-Based Practice Center

- Outcomes of maternal weight gain
- Drug therapies for rheumatoid arthritis
- Treatment of eating disorders
- Second-generation antidepressants
- Tobacco use: prevention, cessation, and control
- Use of episiotomy in routine obstetrical practice
- Management of bronchiolitis in infants and children
- Literacy and health outcomes

RTI DEcIDE Center

In collaboration with several partners around the nation, we operate as one of 13 members of the DEcIDE (Developing Evidence to Inform Decisions about Effectiveness) Network. Part of AHRQ's Effective Health Care program, DEcIDE helps clinicians and patients determine which drugs, devices, procedures, and other medical treatments work best for certain health conditions.

The RTI DEcIDE center carries out accelerated studies, longitudinal experiments, and other projects on a wide variety of disease conditions, interventions, and policy and health care delivery questions. Our aim is to fill knowledge gaps about comparative effectiveness and safety of therapeutics. More generally, RTI will

- Analyze administrative, survey, and clinical databases
- Develop and use new analytic methods, instruments, and statistical applications
- Use computerized surveillance and monitoring systems
- Conduct prospective observational and interventional studies
- Convene scholarly symposia and working groups and publish proceedings from those meetings
- Provide technical assistance to AHRQ.

We typically use de-identified data available through insurers, health plans, and other partner organizations to answer questions about the use, benefits, and risks of medications and other therapies. When desirable and feasible, we also collect primary data on quality of and satisfaction with care and on patient outcomes.

More Information

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